



## News Release

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**Media Contact:**

Jessie Shupe

Media Coordinator

801-538-6210 or 801-450-7307

### **Utah Businesses Put Employee Health at Top of ‘To Do’ Lists** *UDOH Releases Worksite Wellness Survey Report*

(SALT LAKE CITY) – Health care can be costly for employers, but many Utah businesses are catching on to the benefits of worksite wellness programs to their bottom line. A recent Utah Department of Health (UDOH) report shows that nearly one-third of Utah’s medium and large workplaces now offer employees comprehensive worksite health programs aimed at providing activities, education, and an environment that supports healthy lifestyles both in and out of the office.

The report is based on survey data from nearly 500 medium (50-99 employees) and large (at least 100 employees) businesses across the state. “These programs can give employers as much as a \$6 return on investment for every dollar spent,” said UDOH Director of Health Promotion LaDene Larsen. “Utah businesses like ARUP Laboratories and the Salt Lake Valley Emergency Communications Center are leading the way to wellness with healthy lifestyle challenges, lower insurance premiums for healthy behaviors and education on health issues like high blood pressure and high cholesterol,” said Larsen.

The survey was designed to evaluate Utah’s worksite wellness programs against a national goal to increase the proportion of worksites offering wellness to employees. A comprehensive program is defined as one that includes: 1) health education, 2) a supportive social and physical environment, 3) integration of the worksite program into the organization’s structure, 4) linkage of related programs, and 5) a health screening program.

So how does Utah measure up? Overall, 30.2 percent (1,126 employers) of worksites surveyed met the comprehensive criteria. Seven percent met a more stringent criterion developed by the UDOH that requires several programs be in place under each of the above elements.

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All worksites had at least one supportive social and physical environment program (for example, a formal written policy relating to drug and alcohol use) and most worksites (90.1 percent) had at least one health education program delivered to employees via e-mail, intranet, brochures, posters, or videos.

But Larsen says employers can do even more. Only 56 percent of worksites had integrated their wellness programs into the organization’s structure by having the support of the CEO, assigning a person or committee to manage it, or having a budget to support it. Sixty-eight percent of worksites had linkage to related programs like an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and 49.1 percent had at least one health screening program.

“Utah businesses have made some real progress, but a lot of work remains to be done to help Utah workers get healthy and stay healthy,” said Larsen. “We’d like to see more worksites achieve the desirable, more stringent UDOH criteria.”

Based on the survey results, the UDOH recommends the following;

- Worksite wellness programs should include both primary and secondary prevention and health education programs.
- More corporate policies should be established to create a supportive social and physical environment that allows for healthy employee lifestyles.
- Worksite Wellness Committees should be established to ensure that employees’ health needs and interests are addressed.
- Funding for wellness programs should be included in corporate budgets.
- Wellness programs should be linked to other health offerings such as employee assistance programs, nurse advice lines, and on site health screenings to ensure the program is accessible to all employees.

For a complete report, or to learn more about worksite wellness in Utah, please visit:

<http://www.health.utah.gov/worksitewellness/facts.html>.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public’s health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death; assuring access to affordable, quality health care; and promoting healthy lifestyles.*